



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

## Members of the Board

Gloria Molina  
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Pastor Herrera, Jr.  
Director

May 19, 2006

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3265

Dear Supervisors:

## FISCAL YEAR 2006-07 CRITICAL UNMET NEEDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The Fiscal Year 2006-07 Official Budget Request of the Department of Consumer Affairs included unmet needs of \$6.3 million and 59.0 positions.

Of this amount, the Department has identified \$564,000 and 4.0 positions as our highest priorities for consideration by your Board during the Fiscal Year 2006-07 Budget Deliberation. These items align with the County Strategic plan goals of Service Excellence, Workforce Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness and Community Services.

The Department requests your consideration of the following priorities:

- 1. Highest Priority:**      **Funding for 2.0 Administrative Support positions**  
Amount: ..... \$165,000  
Positions: ..... 2.0  
Funding Source:..... Ongoing net County cost

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) is requesting \$165,000 to fund two (2) positions: an Accountant II and an Administrative Assistant III for our Administrative Services Division. Consistent with the County Strategic Plan Goal of Workforce Excellence, we believe that the addition of these two positions is the solution to the long-standing problems in our administrative staff support structure. These problems include, but are not limited to, unmanageable workload, high-employee turnover, and lack of cross-training opportunities and succession planning. Your funding of this request will allow DCA to meet its daily operational needs, the challenges of new County initiatives, and the implementation of the Department's Strategic Plan Objectives that correspond to the County's Strategic Plan Goals.

### Background

The DCA administrative staff support structure has remained the same for the last twenty-five years due to budget limitation. By contrast, during this time period, the functions and workload

of this Division have grown significantly in both volume and complexity due to new and additional grant funding, branch office and program service expansion, and significant changes in the conduct of County business as a result of the County Strategic Plan.

Twenty-five years ago, around 1981-1982, DCA operated just two programs with a total budget of \$903,000. The Department now manages eight grants and a total budget of \$6.3 million. County departments are also now required to implement new initiatives that necessitate planning, development, implementation and management by administrative support positions. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, Records and Archives Project, Emergency Preparedness Plans, Business Continuity Plans, National Information Management System Implementation and compliance, Performance Counts! Budget Integration Project, Building Security Audits, County IT Standards Compliance, eHR implementation, etc.

### Problem

DCA is excited and welcomes the changes that were brought about by additional funding, program enhancements, and the County Strategic Plan. However, these changes have created an exponential increase in administrative workload with no corresponding increase in staff positions. Employees have been experiencing a great deal of difficulty in managing the required additional workload while taking care of existing tasks. As a result, employees are stressed and seek outside opportunities immediately upon acquiring valuable skills and experience.

Since 2003, the Administrative Services Manager position has been back-filled 3 times. This position is currently vacant again. A month ago, the Department's only accounting employee transferred to a larger department for a promotional opportunity after working in DCA for less than two years. Since our current job classifications and workload prevent either cross training or succession planning, these employees leaving creates a negative impact in the Department's operations: productivity, workload efficiencies and management, implementation of valuable program objectives, and delays in responding to County Department, Board, and funding agency requests.

### Proposed Solution

The Accountant II will monitor grant contractual objectives and performance, and ensure that grant revenues are maximized for the implementation of grant-funded County programs. This position will make sure that eCAPS financial and budget data are accurate, and monitor expenditures to ensure that they are within budget limits and are in accordance with grant requirements and County Fiscal Manual. The Accountant II will provide management with a year-end projection of expenditures and revenues on a quarterly or as-needed basis and also assist in the analysis and interpretation of eCAPS data to allow management to make budget decisions in a timely and proactive manner.

The Administrative Assistant III will assist in the analysis and integration of accounting, budget, and statistical data allowing management to make informed and timely decisions regarding the Department's performance measures and strategic objectives. In coordination with the Accountant II, this position will ensure that internal control measures are in place in all administrative activities in accordance with the County Fiscal Manual.



The Administrative Assistant III position will also allow the Department to meet the requirements of various County initiatives such as Records and Archives Project, Emergency Preparedness Plans, Business Continuity Plans, National Information Management System Implementation and compliance, Performance Counts! Budget Integration Project, Building Security Audits, County IT Standards Compliance, eHR implementation, etc., by being able to complete surveys in a timely manner, participate in meetings and trainings, and to plan, develop and implement Departmental systems and procedures to implement and meet the objectives of County initiatives.

The addition of the Accountant II and the Administrative Assistant III in DCA will allow for both cross training and succession planning while providing a "feeder pool" for the Administrative Services Manager position in the Department. The additional workload required by new County initiatives will become a manageable challenge. As employee retention increases through the advancement opportunities provided by cross training and succession planning, employee recruitment, hiring, training dollars, and time invested in these processes will become an investment in the future rather than a drain on current staffing resources.

Statistics

	<u>FY 1981-82</u>	<u>FY 2005-06</u>
Budget	\$903,000	\$6.3 million
Number of grants	2	8
Number of consumer contacts	65,000	700,000
Number of computer workstations	0	78
Number of budgeted positions	25.0	49.0 (FY 2006-07: 55.0)

**2. Second Priority:                    Funding to participate in ISD's IT Shared Services**  
Amount: ..... \$99,000  
Positions: ..... 0.0  
Funding Source:..... Ongoing net County cost

Funding to participate in Internal Services Department's IT Shared Services Program for network management, routine personal computer and network troubleshooting, license administration, system security, maintenance, and support for expanding technological needs of the Department.

**3. Third Priority:                    Funding for an Identity Theft Unit**  
Amount: ..... \$300,000  
Positions: ..... 2.0  
Funding Source:..... Ongoing net County cost

DCA needs funding for 2.0 positions (a Consumer Affairs Specialist and a Consumer Affairs Representative III) and services and supplies to create and staff a critically needed Identity Theft Unit.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing and most harmful crimes in the nation, often leaving victims with enormous debt, damaged credit, and even facing wrongful criminal charges. In 2005, it is estimated that over 10 million people were victims of identity theft, and victims and businesses lost over \$55 billion to this crime nationwide. California is the states with the highest number of reported identity theft cases, with the County of Los Angeles as one of the areas with the highest number of victims.

DCA receives many desperate requests from victims who need assistance in resolving a wide variety of identity theft complaints. Mr. Lopez (not his real name), for example, contacted DCA for help after receiving several threatening letters and telephone calls from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) demanding that he pay "unreported" income taxes from a "second" job. Mr. Lopez stated he never had a second job, but the IRS insisted that he pay the overdue taxes or they would garnish his wages and/or initiate criminal proceedings against him. Fortunately, DCA was able to help Mr. Lopez establish that someone else used his name and Social Security Number to work at the alleged second job.

Unfortunately, victims of identity theft are too common, with many never receiving the assistance they need to resolve their problems. If funded, DCA's Identity Theft Unit would provide this much needed service, including investigation and preparation of cases for criminal prosecution; assistance in disputing and resolving accounts and charges victims are not responsible for, and assistance in removing wrong information from victims' credit reports. Additionally, the Unit would create educational materials and present educational forums to insure that the public learns about identity theft and practical preventative measures they can take to reduce the risk of becoming victims.

### Conclusion

During the deliberations on the Fiscal Year 2006-07 Budget, your Board is requested to give favorable consideration to these items that will allow the Department to implement its Strategic Plan Objectives that correspond to the County's Strategic Plan Goals.

Sincerely,



PASTOR HERRERA, JR.  
Director

PHJ:MGR

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c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
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